THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
98 Weekly parts No. 41

ON TOUR ROUND THE EMPIRE

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BY THE WAY

Nowadays, when we take mobility for granted, it is hard to imagine the excitement of Victorian people when powered transport first came in. The power, of course, came from steam and steam opened up the fabulous new vistas of holidays abroad. "The physician will soon be ordering his patient a change of air in the ancient Garden of Eden, or a fishing trip to the Euphrates," exclaimed one Victorian writer, expressing the contemporary amazement at the new high-speed technology. Others were more fulsome. By the 1880s, there were not only railway historians and railway enthusiasts, like the Cooks of Thomas Cook and Son who spent days on end aboard trains, but also railway poets. Dr. Charles Mackay, who by all accounts was quite well known at the time, wrote a remarkable poem in praise of railways. To help capture the spirit of the age, and the high hopes that people then had for technology, it is well worth repeating:

Lay down your rails, ye nations, near and far;
Yoke your full trains to Steam's triumphal car;
Link town to town; and in these iron bands
Unite the strange and oft-embattled lands.
Peace and Improvement round each train shall soar,
And Knowledge light the Ignorance of yore:
Men, joined in amity, shall wonder long
That Hate had power to lead their fathers wrong;
Or that false glory lured their hearts astray,
And made it virtuous and sublime to slay.

Blessings on Science, and her handmaid, Steam!
They make Utopia only half a dream;
And show the fervent, of capacious souls,
Who watch the ball of Progress as it rolls,
That all as yet completed, or begun,
Is but the dawning that precedes the sun.

All letters please to: **The British Empire, 76, Oxford Street, London W.1.**

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Cover: The combined power of steamship and steam-engine, so vigorously portrayed on this Canadian Pacific poster, was the driving force behind tourism in the age of Empire.

ON TOUR ROUND THE EMPIRE

By the end of the 19th Century, Britain had coloured a quarter of the globe red and girdled it with railways, steamship lines, posts and telegraphs like a giant parcel tied up with string. On the magic carpet of modern travel, British tourists set out to admire the world and their own special birthright, the Empire.

The lure of exotic places, and the pride of a nation that had conquered distance, come over strongly in this P. & O. travel poster.

In the plushness of a first-class compartment in 1855, a midshipman converses politely while flirting unobtrusively. Railways, in the words of a contemporary poet, offered the rich "sweet civility on rustic wilds."

On week-day mornings back in the 1890s, the romantic heyday of Victorian tourism, a dapper little man with a small beard used to arrive punctually at the headquarters of Thomas Cook's, the world's most famous travel agency, in Ludgate Circus. He was John Mason Cook, the son who completed the name "Cook & Son." Before passing briskly through the portals to begin the day's work, he used to pause purposefully and inspect the posters on the outside, checking for splashes of mud from the horse-drawn traffic clattering round the corner. The posters had to be kept spotless, as spotless as the reputation of Cook's itself.

The son's pride in the business was entirely natural. For Cook's were the pioneers of modern tourism and already their name had become a household word in many languages. In those frenetic years of European empire-building at the end of the 19th Century, John Mason Cook, masterfully wielding the technological power of a dominant civilization, had built an empire within the Empire.

Since his father's death in 1892, Cook had taken into his hands the reins of an astonishing power. From his office in the grandiose building at Ludgate Circus he could direct the movement of travellers throughout the world. He could accommodate 1,000 tourists in Victorian luxury under canvas in the Holy Land, or convey Eastern princes across oceans and continents with all their panoply of servants, elephants and tame tigers. He could lay on a boat trip round the world, a trans-American railway journey, a steamship cruise to the Azores or a meeting with a chieftain in Darkest Africa.

This magnificent age of world tourism had its roots in the beginnings of the Empire itself, when the English became an outward-looking nation in the second half of the 16th Century.

At the same time as the Elizabethan explorers sailed out into the unknown in search of Eastern riches, new worlds and national glory, the nobility began to cross the Channel in search of the latest and best in European culture. So was invented a new form of travel, that peculiarly English institution, the Grand Tour. The first tourists were at large.

The early practitioners of the Grand Tour – from which the word "tourism" derives – went with the entirely serious intent of completing their education by acquiring a gloss of Renaissance culture from Italy, and the international language of diplomacy from France. They were concerned with art, science and politics, and regarded the Continent very much as a finishing school. But the serious minded are few, and as larger numbers of aristocrats went abroad, the Continent came to be regarded much more as a playground. By the 18th Century, when aristocrats on tour at any one time were numbered not in tens but in hundreds, spending was lavish, pleasure extravagant. A duke could spend as much as £25,000 over five years.

This kind of tour was for long the privilege of a tiny élite. By the late 18th Century the social and economic changes that were overtaking Britain enabled a few successful merchants and professional men to creep in at the bottom. The newcomers to travel paid £100 or £150 for a shortened, less grand tour lasting for a season, perhaps a year. But far more radical change was required before tourism of any sort could come within the reach of ordinary men. That change came on the heels of the Industrial Revolution – the revolution of coal, iron and steam that by 1800 was beginning radically to alter the way of life in Britain.

Popular tourism was a British invention, for Britain was the nursery of technology and tourism was inextricably linked with technological advance – with railways and steamships. At the start of the 19th Century – barely six generations ago – a man could travel no faster than a horse at the gallop. Then, in 1825, George Stephenson opened the world's first steam railway and by 1829 his *Rocket* locomotive had achieved the miraculous speed of 29 m.p.h. – four times faster than the average horse-drawn coach. Now suddenly, man had broken free with "bones of brass and iron, nerves and muscles that cannot tire," in the words of one of the first railway historians.

The new technology's advantages of high speed and low cost produced dramatic social consequences. This was quickly demonstrated by the Manchester to Liverpool Railway, which in 1830 became the world's first regular passenger line. After an unfortunate start when William Huskisson, M.P. and guest of honour, stepped in front of a moving locomotive and was killed, the railway carried 445,000 passengers in its first year of operation – almost 4 per cent of the population of Britain. Travel had become a mass movement.

By the late 1830s, as the railways stretched out their iron fingers across Britain, and industrialization created a new class of working men eager for fresh air, the material and social conditions for popular tourism were firmly established. The time was ripe for an entrepreneur who would build a business on this foundation by offering special outings at reduced fares for instruction and pleasure. The hour awaited the man.

By the vagaries of chance and circumstance, Thomas Cook stepped forward, chosen, as he liked to believe, by Providence, to become the pioneer of modern tourism. In his success, he made travel not just a movement of people but a people's movement.

His background placed him in the right social station to lead such a movement. He was born in a humble semi-detached cottage in Melbourne, a small Midlands town near Derby noted for its lush market-gardens. At the age of ten, financial problems at home forced him to leave school and become a penny-a-day garden lad, and then, at 14, an indentured wood-turner. The formative influence on his life was his mother, daughter of a Bible-thumping Baptist minister. She brought up Thomas in the stern, religious mould of Evangelicalism, the puritanical, proselytizing Christian movement of the early 19th Century. To the grave he remained a God-fearing, serious man.

Throughout his life, Thomas Cook, who lacked the single-minded business approach later possessed by his son, was a fervent supporter of good causes. For more than three years he abandoned wood-turning to become a full-time village missionary, trudging the Midlands countryside for the Baptist Church and making a little on the side by printing and

In a third-class railway carriage of the 1850s, the chaotic crush – a wry contrast to the notice on the wall – graphically exemplifies the demand to experience the novelty of steam transport.

Designed for dressy continental seaside resorts, this mid-19th-Century bathing-costume featured plaid knickers with frills, a full red flannelette tunic and a short bolero.

publishing religious tracts and pamphlets. He took an active part in the anti-Corn Law campaign in 1845, launching a radical publication called *The Cheap Bread Herald.* As late as the 1850s, he personally organized a 15,000-gallon nightly free "soup-run" and retailed potatoes at cost to the poor of Leicester.

The cause to which he was most firmly committed was temperance, the movement that snowballed in reaction to the appalling drunkenness of the 1830s. When Cook became a teetotaller in 1836, he was sufficiently conscientious to pour 60 gallons of his own beer down an open drain. It was in this temperance role that he later formed – with laudable but purblind idealism – a teetotal club for Fleet Street newspapermen. He also built temperance hotels and left to posterity such orotund and unmemorable phrases as "Awake, drunkards, and howl for the miseries coming upon you."

And it was as Secretary of the Harborough Temperance Society that in 1841 Cook organized a round trip between Leicester and Loughborough so that a party of abstainers might attend a temperance meeting. In nine open railway carriages, then known as "tubs," 570 people were carried 11 miles, entertained with a band, harangued for three hours about the "monster intemperance" and carried back without mishap – all for the price of one shilling. This type of special trip at reduced price was called an "excursion." Cook was not the first to organize one (there had been a similar outing in 1838 to a public execution), but his personal supervision of the trip was a genuine pioneering feature and the success of the venture encouraged him to attempt, in his own terminology, "a wider and more circuitous range" in the future: what he called "tours."

Over the years, Thomas Cook increasingly turned his attention to tours, applying the same dogged Evangelical determination that he put into his other good works. At first his travel arrangements, which he later called his "amateur performances," occupied him only during the summer months. But by the 1850s he was beginning to take tourism more seriously, seeing his work as a social crusade to bring ordinary people the educational advantages of travel.

Early tourism was a very serious institution. Cook's continental travellers – "Cookites" they were now being called – were a source of upper-class amusement and disdain. Cook's clients were "tradesmen and their wives, merchants, clerks away for a week's holiday, smart mechanics and a Cockney element," reported a contributor to one of Charles Dickens's periodicals. These humble people had the high-minded outlook characteristic of the Evangelical Revival. For example, in his own publication, *Physical, Moral and Social Aspects of Excursions or Tours,* Thomas Cook warmly endorsed the idea that the chief value of tourism was to "unite man to man, and man to God."

Many of Cook's competitors began their enterprises with similar attitudes. John Frame demanded strict temperance from all his clients; Dean and Dawson began with do-gooding factory outings for the proletariat of Stockport; Sir Henry Lunn started his continental tours mainly for clergymen and their families.

In the 1850s Cook's horizons widened. He invented the package tour by incorporating numerous diverse items in the overall price of his tours – travel by rail, ship, horse, coach and car over different national networks; beds; food; cabs; sightseeing; and even drink in his later, less fervent years. And as the railway networks expanded, he extended his operations to take in all the British Isles, then Europe and finally the world.

It was about the same time that steam began to conquer the oceans, thus opening up the whole world to modern cheap tourism. Until the steamship came into regular use, sea voyages were prohibitively expensive as well as unbearably long and hopelessly unscheduled. In 1770, for example, William Hickey, a rich Calcutta newspaper-owner and raconteur of Anglo-Indian scandal, had to pay £583 6*s.* 0*d.* for a passage from Calcutta to England, a journey that could take anything up to nine months, depending on the weather.

Though there had been pleasure steamers on the Clyde in 1812, it was not until the second half of the 19th Century that steam travel on the high seas became reliable and efficient. Two British innovations – iron hulls and screw-propellers – were chiefly responsible: they made the modern passenger liner possible. After that, and with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, journey times to India dropped to 17 days and second-class fares to £50. The flowering of Victorian world tourism could begin.

At the same time a change was occurring in the social complexion of tourism. The serious, pioneering period of tourism passed and the earnest attitudes of early Victorian Britain began to fade. They were replaced by more straightforward, worldly ideas of recreation and enjoyment.

In part, this was because the geographical boundaries of tourist travel expanded very rapidly, and therefore outstripped the range of the humbler tourist.

This advertisement for an all-purpose soap that doubled as toothpaste appeared in one of Cook's travel journals. Cook had a fund of such practical hints for tourists venturing abroad.

Late Victorian world tourism was the heyday of a wealthier traveller, and the well-off had never been so deeply affected by Evangelical earnestness as the humble.

Cook's new projects clearly reflected this process of rapid expansion and decreasing seriousness. In 1864, less than ten years after his first continental tour, Thomas Cook was taking groups to Italy. The following year, when the American Civil War ended, he reconnoitred the United States, and in 1869 he began his tours up the Nile, the first steps towards making Egypt a favourite winter holiday resort of Victorian Britain. In 1872 he was already making a much-publicized world tour to discover "with perfect accuracy the best way round the globe" for large numbers of people.

In 1870 he gave his son, John Mason Cook, full control of the London office. The younger Cook was very much a late Victorian, unencumbered with his father's Evangelical preoccupations. As he took an increasing part in running the business, a change of emphasis occurred. Cook's ceased to be associated with philanthropy, and became a byword for comfort and middle-class respectability. A leisurely and luxurious style of tourism was born, reaching its zenith at the turn of the 19th Century. Late Victorians wallowed in comfort. They also drew themselves up with pride, for there was an element in their world tourism that had been absent from the European Grand Tour: Empire.

After four centuries of discovery, expansion and development, Britain had become the world's greatest power. Nowhere was her dominance more in evidence than at sea, where the lifelines ran to her far-flung colonies. Britain controlled most of the world's communications: the submarine telegraph lines, the shipping lanes, the coaling-stations. And this predominance in steam technology extended to the growing network of railways, many of which were planned and constructed by British engineers.

Consequently, Britain also dominated the world's tourism. The ubiquitous figure of the Englishman, upright in the panelled dining-car of his steam-train, supine in the deck-chair of his steamship, peering at the sights from Canada to Australia, from Jerusalem to Yokohama, introduced natives almost everywhere to the customs and quirks of the most powerful nation in the world.

The British began to speak proudly of *Our Ocean Railways* and *Our Iron Roads* (the titles of two books published in 1883 and 1893), of the "glory in being the nation that has produced this work." The mood of the moment was an aggressive pride in British power – not only the power of Army and Navy, of power expressed by political control of a quarter of the world, but the power of factories, foundries and laboratories. The romantic attraction of technology is a strange concept to late 20th-Century man, but to the Victorians it was a reality, revealed in popular book-titles like *The Romance of Modern Electricity*.

Perhaps most exciting of all were the romances of the railways and the ship. For these two forms of steam transport directly and dramatically communicated to ordinary British people the strength of their wonderful new civilization, strength they were convinced no other nation could match.

When people went abroad as tourists in those days, they travelled almost as conquerors. Supplied with Cook's amenities, they could look down with easy disdain on less civilized peoples, convinced of their own imense superiority. There was much talk of "annihilating distance," a military metaphor well in keeping with the time. Every railway bridge, every culvert, every viaduct soaring above river or canyon was seen as a monument to British power.

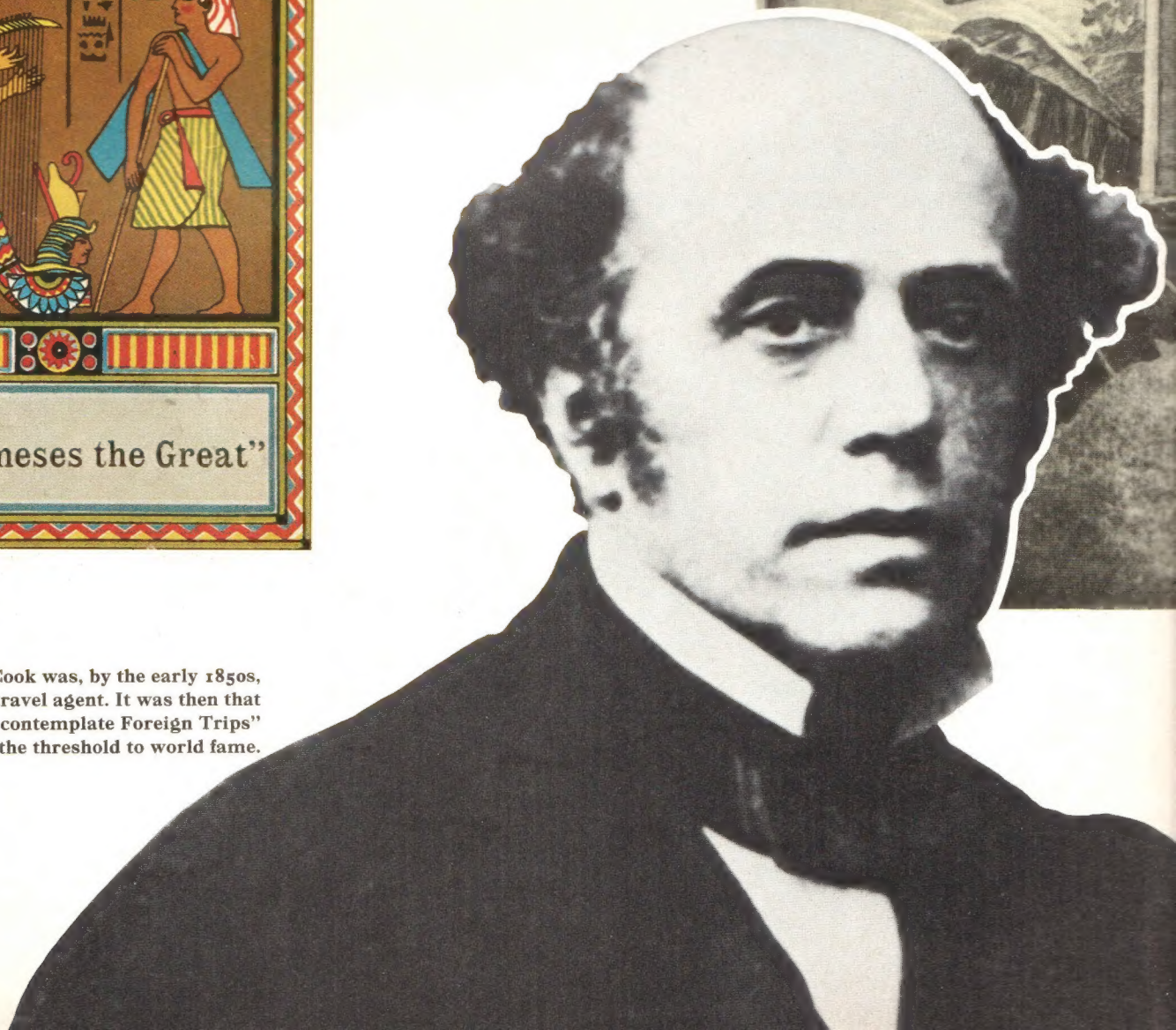
The same imperial pride continued after the First World War when British world tourism enjoyed an elegant, jingoist postscript. In the 1930s, the era of the great liners, the national power complex was expressed in international duels to capture the Blue Riband, the coveted award for the fastest ocean crossings. Tourists could browse with patriotic pride through thick little handbooks crammed with impressive statistics of British shipping tonnage and sectional plans of monarchs of the seas such as the *Aquitania* and the *Queen Mary*.

Until the Second World War, world tourism remained a middle-class idyll, "unspoiled" by the noisy presence of the lower classes. The whole drama of British tourism from 1870 to 1939 was a period piece in which the proud attitudes of the golden years at the turn of the century continued hardly without alteration. For those seven decades, British tourists set out with Empire in their hearts and minds, and wherever they went, whether the Union Jack happened to be flying there or not, Empire went along with them.

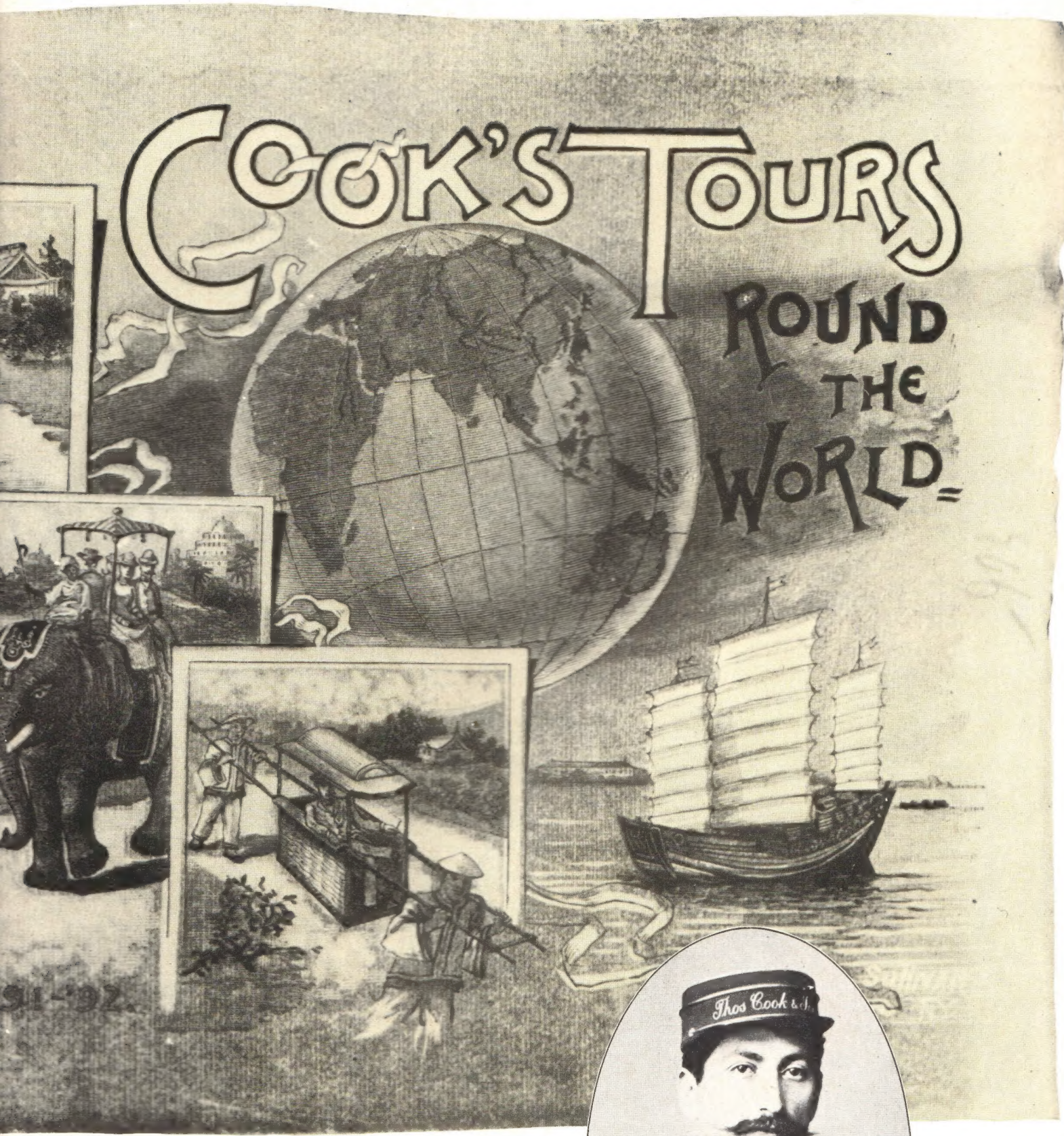
THE MAN FROM COOK'S

"Oh, follow the man from Cook's," ran a song of 1898, "the wonderful man from Cook's." To many people at that time, he really was wonderful. Railways and steamships had breached the ancient barriers of time and space, and cheap travel abroad suddenly became a possibility for the rising middle classes of industrial Britain. Thomas Cook & Son made it an exciting reality, and to tourists in strange lands the man from Cook's became the symbol of British safety and comfort all over the world.

Printed on the back of the card on the left was a who's who of passengers to smooth introductions at the start of a Cook's Nile tour. ***Rameses the Great***, launched in 1899, was the first in the company's fleet of paddle-steamers built for lazy, luxurious cruises up-river.



Thomas Cook was, by the early 1850s, Britain's top travel agent. It was then that he "began to contemplate Foreign Trips" and crossed the threshold to world fame.



A Cook's travel brochure advertises one of the first world tours. This took in China, Ceylon and India, following a route planned by Thomas Cook in 1872 when he made a pioneering trip round the world in 222 days.

The reassuring British face of one of the men from Cook's typifies the image of a firm whose maxim was "leave it all to us."

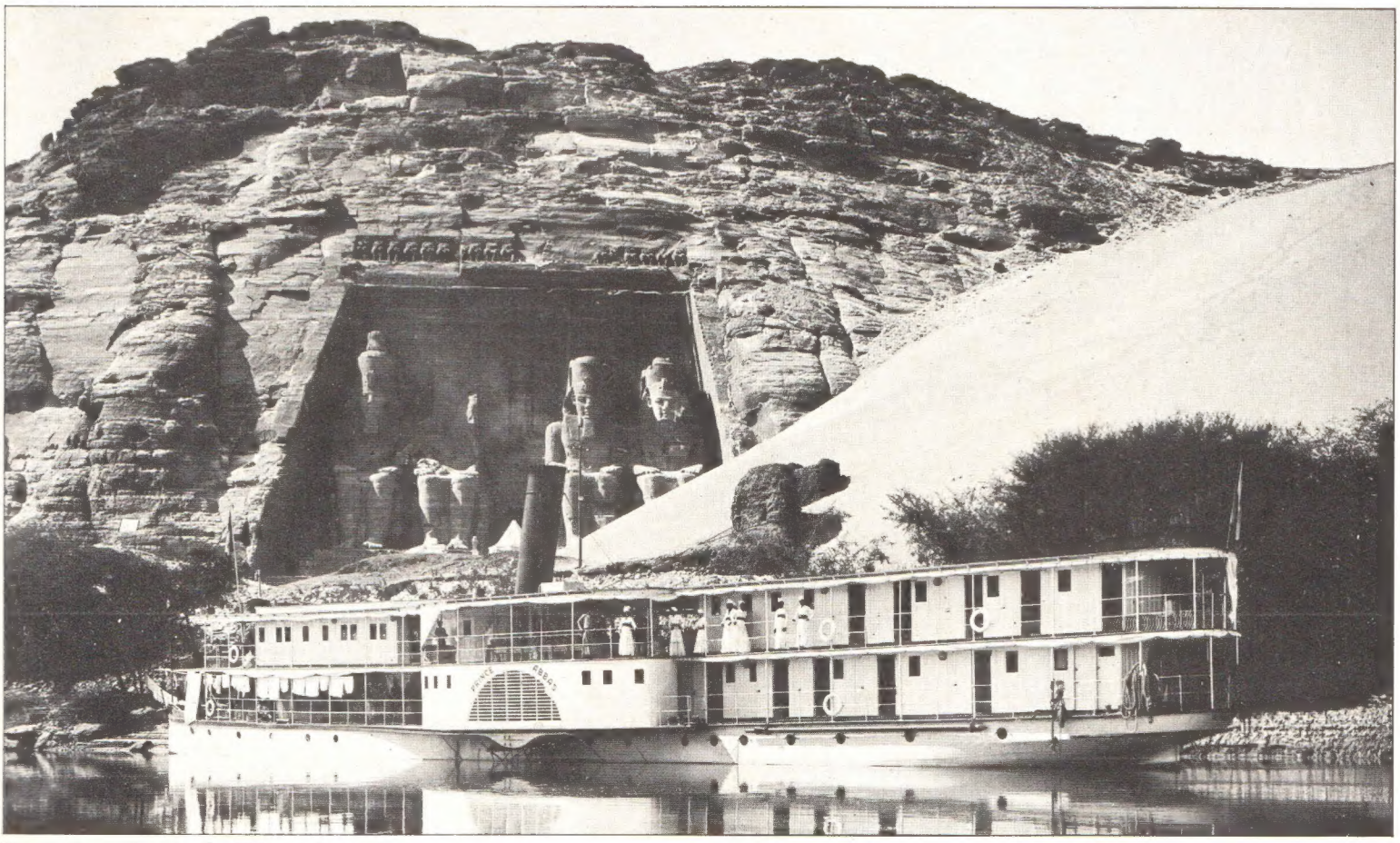
With Cook to the Nile

Thomas Cook had come a long way by 1869, from the Midlands to the Nile, to be precise. Since his first excursion in 1841 – a temperance outing from Leicester to Loughborough and back – he had extended his operations through Europe, "over the classic waters of the Adriatic and Mediterranean," round by the "Eastern Lands of the Bible" to the blazing heat of North Africa. In 1869 he hired two paddle-steamers and ran a pioneering cruise up the Nile.

In another sense too, he had come a long way: from mere Brother Cook, the Baptist temperance campaigner, to "Field-Marshal" Cook, as a Scottish journalist called him, manœuvrer of large bodies of men. The change had not been easy, but he became "so thoroughly imbued with the Tourist spirit" that he conquered the world for mass travel and became a quasi-imperial figure.

By his death in 1892, he had his own fleet cruising on the Nile, his own shipyard at Boulac, his own luxury hotels at Luxor and an army of Arab employees. Along the Nile, Egyptian peasants grew produce to feed tourists from Tunbridge Wells or Cheltenham, who devoured country-house breakfasts on board Cook's paddle-steamers. Battalions of Arabs waited ashore, ready to convey Cook's sedan-borne expeditions into the desert; aboard, more Arabs in white robes served Huntley & Palmer's biscuits for tea under awnings. Whole towns of Egyptians aspired to "good Cook shop all the time," as they called a permanent post with Cook's. "You see the back of a native turban," recounted *Blackwood's Magazine*, "long blue gown, red girdle, bare brown legs; 'How truly oriental!' you say. Then he turns round, and you see 'Cook's Porter' emblazoned across his breast.

"The nominal governor of Egypt is the Khedive," concluded the article; "its real governor, for a final touch of comic opera, is Thomas Cook & Son." In fact, it was not comic: several times "Field-Marshal" Cook had played a vital military role. In 1884, for example, he helped transport Wolseley's expeditions to the Sudan. And as "Paymaster-General," he was one of the most influential men in Egypt.



Nearly 800 miles up the Nile, at the ancient Egyptian Temple of Abu Simbel, a Cook's "Improved Passenger Saloon Steamer" lies quietly moored. Cook named it *Prince Abbas* after the Egyptian ruler who had granted him a travel monopoly on the river.

Cook's tourists, imperiously riding in wickerwork chairs (the same as those used by British generals in colonial wars), return to their Nile steamer from a sightseeing trip to Karnak, site of a vast temple built by the Pharaohs.

Cook's Arab crewmen moor a Cook's paddle-steamer ready for Cook's tourists on what was in effect Cook's private river, the Nile.

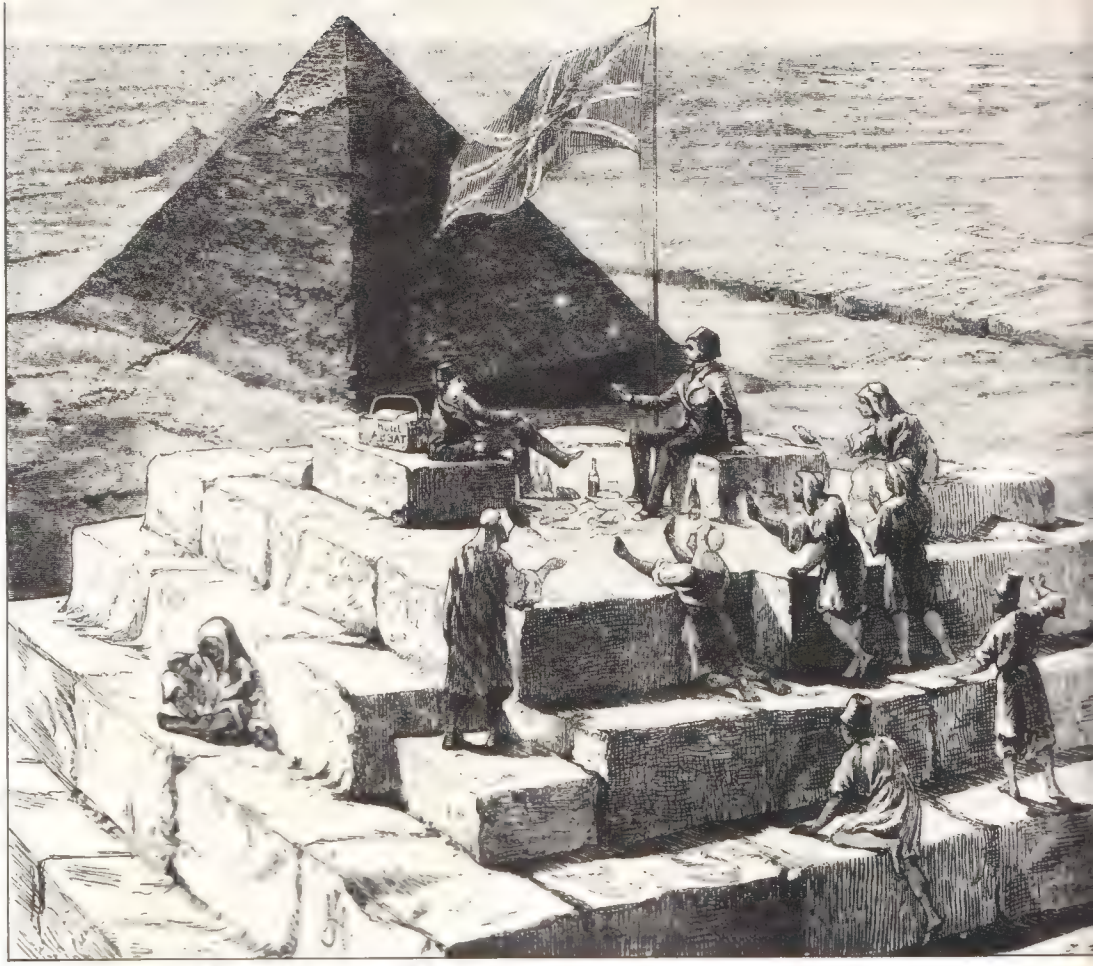
Englishmen on a pyramid in the 1870s receive a hand up from Cook's porters; these tourists were clearly the portly kind who had eaten large breakfasts.

Ubiquitous Englishmen

"The French have a notion that, go where you may, to the top of a pyramid or to the top of Mont Blanc, you are sure to meet an Englishman reading a newspaper," quipped the British M.P. and journalist Henry Labouchère in 1871.

One cannot help sympathizing with the French. Newspaper-reading was a very British habit and Thomas Cook had made it possible to re-enact British habits almost anywhere. In the reading-rooms of the Nile paddle-steamers, the newspapers arrived with the faultless regularity expected at a Pall Mall club.

Cook's pilgrims processed through the Middle East with enough tents, horses and servants for royalty. Every morning the whole movable hotel – iron bedsteads, wool mattresses, carpeted floors – was struck, transported on baggage animals and at sundown pitched again, so expertly that each person found his own numbered napkin from breakfast laid beside his dinner-plate. "Grand Hotel service" all over the world – that was what the British enjoyed, and other nations understandably marvelled at it.



This drawing of a "pyramid luncheon" had a disdainful caption that remarked on the Arabs hawking forged antiques and on the tourists' initials carved into the stones.

All the camels and donkeys, stiff collars and incredible headgear of Cook's Nile tourists appear in this regulation photograph at the pyramids.

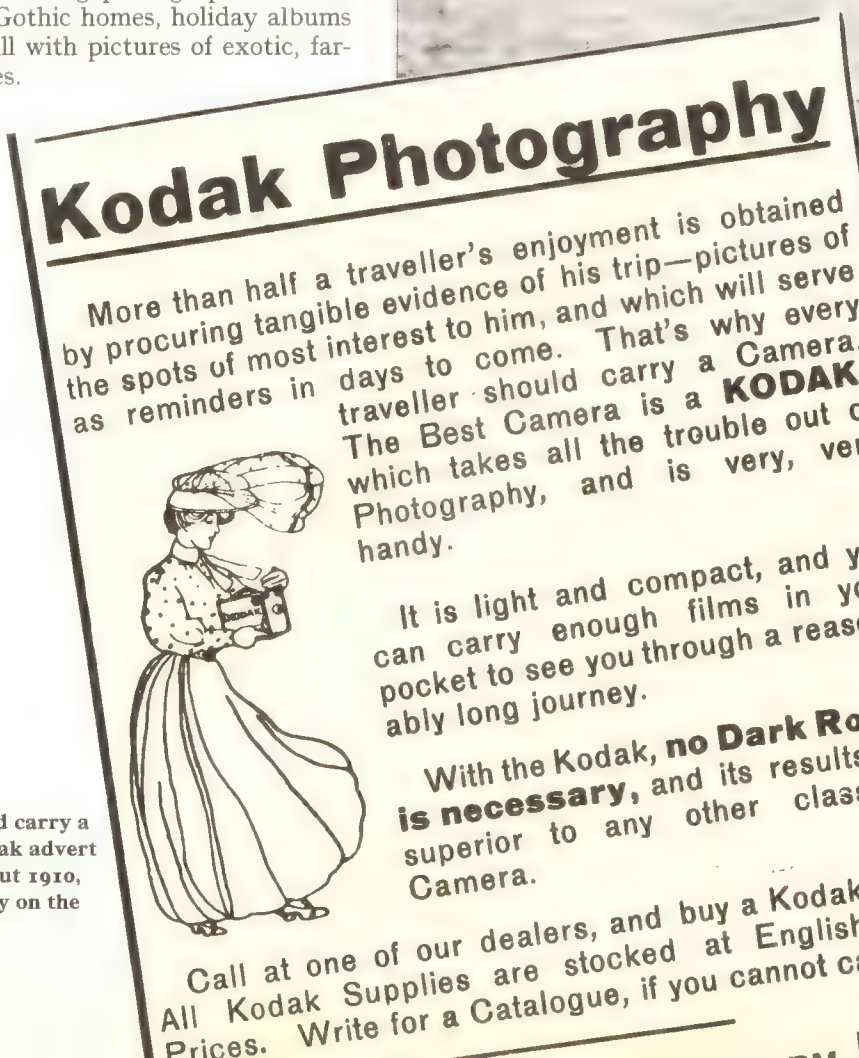
Holiday with a Kodak

"You press the button, we do the rest," ran the advertisement for the first box camera. It was a fine piece of advertising copy and helped add a new dimension to tourism: amateur photography. Behind it was the shrewd, commercial mind of an American photographer: George Eastman, the "Kodak King."

Eastman recognized that photography in the early 1880s was far too complicated. To take a picture by the wet-plate collodion process, you had to carry a dark-tent, a camera the size of a soap-box, a strong tripod, heavy glass plates, a nitrate bath and a water-container. Very few people took photographs.

In 1888 Eastman introduced a small black box, measuring $6\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ inches and weighing 22 ounces, which could take pictures while being held in the hand. He invented a simple name for it, the Kodak.

Suddenly, large numbers of people – especially the globe-trotting British tourists – were taking photographs. And in Victorian Gothic homes, holiday albums began to fill with pictures of exotic, far-away places.



"Every traveller should carry a Camera," urged a Kodak advert (right) in 1890. By about 1910, thousands, like the lady on the left, did.

Native embarrassment and colonial amusement mount as a British amateur photographer tries out his new dry-plate camera in about 1905.

Stooping and hooded amateur photographers became a common sight all over the world in the late 1880s, when "instant photography" replaced the long exposure times of the past (up to 30 minutes in the 1850s). Only then could the phrase "Hold it just a second" pass into the language.

Tourists to India could hire a car and motor along some of the grandest roads in the Empire by the early 1900s, when the "motor garage" went up next door to Cook's and the P. & O.

Passage to the Orient

There was splendour and pageantry at the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, as befitted the unlocking of the gateway to the fabled East. Many British tourists were at the ceremony. Appropriately, Thomas Cook was there too, honoured guest of the Canal's engineer, Ferdinand de Lesseps. It was Cook who pioneered tours through the new passage to the Orient, to India and beyond.

In 1880 Cook opened offices in Bombay and Calcutta, and soon sightseers were bowling across the subcontinent in first-class railway carriages or the earliest motor cars, with the 19th-Century tourist guide *Murray's Handbook* on their knees and plenty of Scotch and soda in their tiffin baskets. Politicians officially encouraged these developments: Gladstone praised Cook for advancing "intercommunication between countries," Salisbury spoke of his "imperial work." With the opening up of the Far East – there was a Cook's office in Japan by 1908 – Cook's could claim world importance as a link between East and West.

Pioneering tourists who visited Calcutta in the cool season of 1875 are rowed back to their ship in "teeth-chattering, shivering silence."

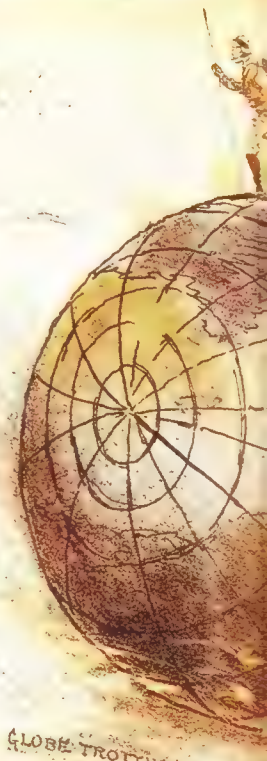
"Roughing it in the Far East" (right) was an old Hong Kong saying. As a tourist arriving in 1888 would have discovered, it was an understatement used to describe "H.K.'s" easy life. The open-air ball given that July on the Peak was an example of the glitter and elegance the colony could offer its visitors.

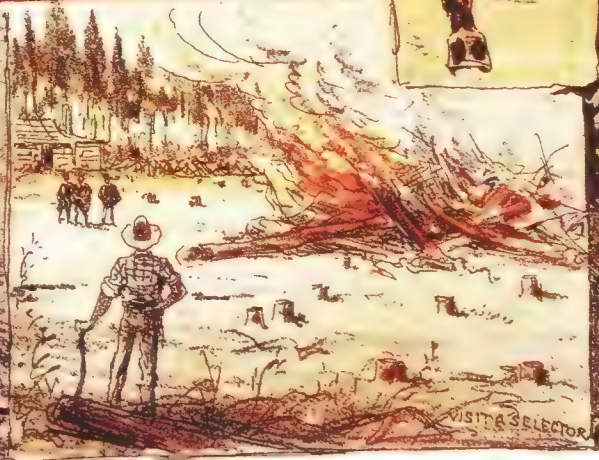
Roughing it in the Far East
Meet me by Moonlight Alone
Before the
Evening Dress in the Tropics

Globe-Trotters in Australia

"The globe-trotter is only a recently developed species of the genus traveller," *The Australasian Sketcher* archly informed its readers on April 9, 1884. An editorial comment on the sketches seen here described the evolution of the species since the Suez Canal opened in 1869, and continued: "It is only since the days of big Orient steamers, and of weekly mail communication with England, that the globe-trotter has largely extended his peregrinations to Australia. Now, he is to be found wherever there is anything to be seen or wherever anything is going on, gazing calmly at men and their manners through his inscrutable eyeglass. The globe-trotter, as a rule, is pleasant in manner, conversable, imperturbable as befits one who has surveyed mankind from China to Peru, good tempered."

Clearly, these tweedy tourists greatly amused the Australians. They are drawn here half satirically, half sympathetically, politely enduring the inevitable speech of welcome, riding round a grazing run, meeting King Billy, the last Tasmanian Aborigine, philosophically experiencing a rough road in one of Cobb's famous high-speed coaches, visiting a "selector" – a pioneer settler – and finally falling in love.





OWN ROUND THE RUN
ENJOY FIVE MINUTES WITH KING BILLY
INTERVIEW A MONARCH OF THE FOREST
WITNESS A LITTLE ROUGH RIDING
ASSIST AT A PICNIC
Mrs Globe Trotter
Mr Globe Trotter
THE USUAL ENDING

Steel of Empire

In 1935, a "Romantic History of the Canadian Pacific" was published. Its grandiose title, *Steel of Empire*, suggested a giant steel skewer holding the Empire together like a joint of beef. Similar ideas had been around since 1885, the year the railway opened. For not only did "The Queen's Highway" unite British Canada; it also provided a fast, "all-red" route from Britain to the Pacific, a short cut to her colonies in the Far East.

It was an intensely romantic railway. At an average speed of 28 m.p.h., including stops, it took a week to cross the continent. For the leisurely, frock-coated tourist of the 1890s, it was delightful to saunter through carriages beautifully inlaid with rare woods, recline in a cloud of cigar smoke in the smoking-room or sip iced water in the stateroom as the prairies and mountains of virgin Canada slipped by the window. It was gently titillating to prepare for bed in the sleeping-cars, where girls and men had to undress in the hugger-mugger, curtained proximity of the bunks. And it was bracing to feel imperial pride in "this Canada of ours," as one early British traveller put it, in those mighty steel tracks "beneath our Northern skies."

First-class C.P.R. carriages, at £5,000 to £6,000 each, cost more than the engines and were, in the words of one Empire tourist in 1885, "a marvel of elegance."

A party of Empire tourists pose for the camera, by courtesy of a deferential management, on a 100-ton mountain engine of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

This C.P.R. dining-car, with tables laid for dinner, was one of the many kept ready at intervals along the line. Each car was picked up for one meal and dropped off again after it.

With Love from Maude

When the Beatrices and Mabels, the Alberts, Edwards, Emilies and Maudes of the 1890s went abroad, they found it all too easy to keep in touch with home. For Britain's overseas mail service had reached an apogee of speed and frequency that severely taxed Victorian correspondents' imaginations. No wonder then that the picture-postcard enjoyed an immediate success when it was introduced in 1894. The pictures often made up for lack of news, as these cards clearly show, and the age of the vacuous holiday message had already arrived.

But, as Thomas Cook rightly presumed, it gave a tourist halfway up the Nile a good feeling to find the morning post on his breakfast table and to know that the outgoing mail was cleared every night. It was evidence that the whole organization by which Britain led the world in posts and communications was at his service – the fast packets of the P. & O. to India, the double-engined mail trains across Europe, the horses, runners, wagons and coaches to remotest Rhodesia. For the tourist abroad, wherever he was, writing a picture postcard home was an expression of imperial pride.

Native golfers, from Durban

Carefully posed skirmish, from Durban

Eastern mystery, from Egypt

"Ugly-looking customers," from South Africa

Collector's item, from Bombay

Life on the Ocean Wave

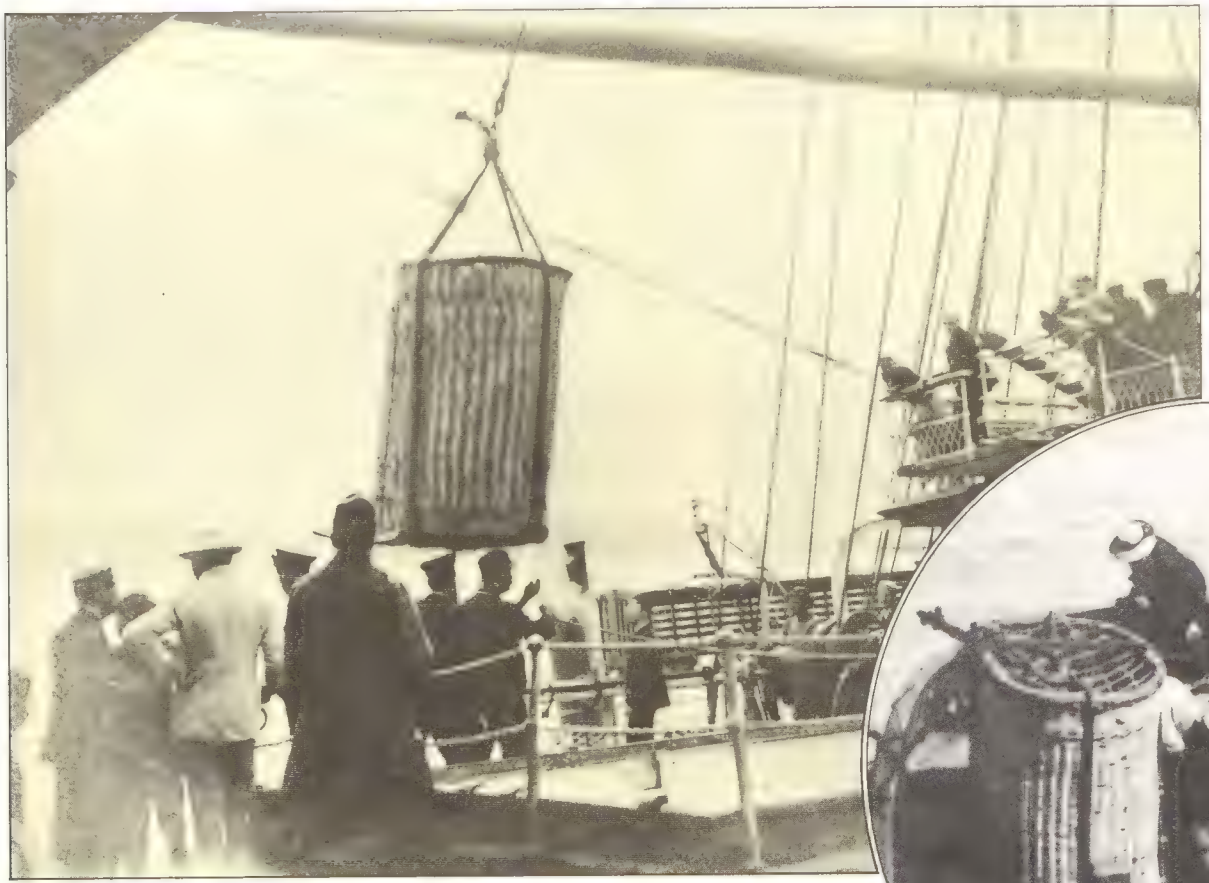
In the 1890s, when the ocean wave was very much a British prerogative, shipboard tourism assumed a ponderous grandeur. Even incongruous schoolboy games on deck were played with genteel formality. With the silk tea-gowns, evening dress at dinner and organ-playing in the picture-gallery, the atmosphere was decidedly smug.

This was understandable, for everywhere they went, shipborne travellers saw British vessels. Over half the world's merchant shipping flew the British flag; British ships were carrying 200,000 passengers and as many seamen at any one time; and of every 1,000 tons of shipping using the Suez Canal, 700 were British.

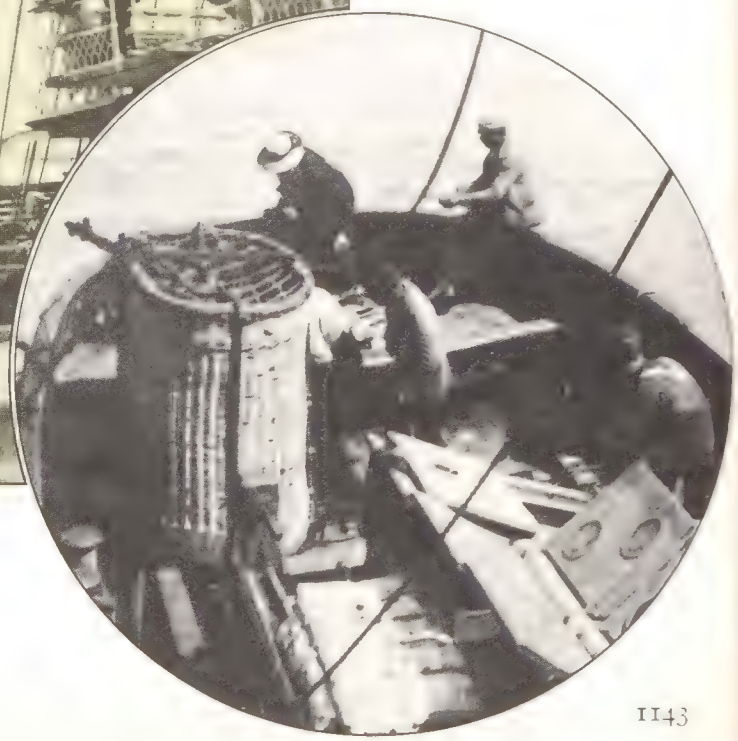
But there was nothing eternal about this. Between 1890 and 1910, Britain's share of world tonnage was falling and her inordinately proud shipowners, resting on the laurels of the past, were investing too much in passenger liners at the expense of tramp shipping. Late Victorian smugness had shaky foundations.

A bout of "Norwegian cock-fighting" begins on board a mail-ship steaming to South Africa. Such pastimes, exported from prep. school, were an integral part of life on early liners.

In this "cock-fight," the man on the right topples to his defeat. The idea was that the contestants, sitting trussed up round a pole, wriggled around on their bottoms trying to knock each other over. "It was most amusing," commented one traveller, "especially if the ship was rolling."



This man-sized basket disembarking passengers at Port Elizabeth was a big attraction as it was swung up from the deck (left) and then, with a passenger caged inside, lowered into a waiting launch (below).



In "slinging the monkey," a game devised on long voyages in the days of sail, the victim was slung from a bulkhead and was forced to perform any action the spectators wished before he was released.

The lounge of the *Winchester Castle*, launched in 1930, was a middle-class drawing-room stretched to baronial size and decorated in what could be christened the "Late Empire" style.

The Craze for the Cruise

By the early 1930s, British passenger lines were in trouble. Not only had the gloom of the Depression settled; foreign countries were subsidizing quite uneconomic degrees of comfort for prestige on the high seas. So began the luxury war.

British shipowners fought back with jingoist propaganda and glossy advertising, such as these photographs of a 1930s Union Castle liner, the *Winchester Castle*. To fill empty cabins, they stimulated the craze for cruises that became a hall-mark of late inter-war tourism. Along traditional shipping lanes, modified to take in exotic ports of call, palatial elegance came into its own as Empire-minded tourists languidly enjoyed the last age of British dominance at sea.

A swimming-pool of Byzantine magnificence was provided for first-class passengers, with a bar serving freshly mixed cocktails and, in this instance, attractive and suave models to complete the picture.

In one of the first-class cabins, two agency models act out a scene for a new brochure. The setting – fashionable Art Déco furniture, oak doors solid enough for a mansion – and the social image – dressing for dinner, country-house style – were carefully pitched to middle-class pretensions.

Pleasure for the Million

When Thomas Cook wrote in his early days, "We must have railways for the million," he was thinking of day-trippers and workingmen's holidays. On the principle of the greatest pleasure for the greatest number, he saw railways as a social force.

And so did the astonished inhabitants of Brighton when the first holiday special steamed in from London in 1844. From 57 carriages drawn by no less than six engines, the train disgorged close on 2,000 passengers. By the standards of the time, this was a very large social force indeed.

There were soon aristocratic murmurings about "those swarms," but in vain. By the 1890s many British beaches, especially Ramsgate, Margate and Blackpool, had become almost a preserve of the working classes. Their social betters were abroad – with Cook's, who now catered for late Victorian pomp. Not till after 1945 did the workers catch up with international tourism. And by then, in the Clarkson's era of package tours to the Costa Brava, Empire and imperial pride were shadows in the past.

Figures of contentment at Lowestoft eloquently testify to urban Victorians' delight at a day by the sea.

As the herring fleet sails out from Scarborough on an evening tide in 1897, the last of the day-trippers watch from the beach or take a final plunge from the few bathing-machines still in the water.

Three "tweenies" go paddling, a diversion more common in Victorian times than bathing, which was regarded more as a restorative than a sport.

High jinks on the beach – like this scene at Yarmouth in the 1890s – contributed to the middle-class belief that seaside trippers were incorrigibly vulgar.

At Ramsgate, donkey rides were second only to buns, meat-pies and ginger-pop as an attraction for London schoolboys.

THE LONG EVENING of the old world tourism – of natty Edwardians gazing lazily out of a porthole (top), of a single lady traveller writing up her "log-book" on the doomed *Lusitania* (centre) – finally drew to a close in the late thirties. The couple (bottom) leaning on the rail of a great liner edging away from the quay, were waving not only to friends left behind but also to the age of Empire tourism.

Officer, Royal Foot Artillery, 1832

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